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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Putin

Notetakers: Jeff Houle, Nikki Williams,
and Joe Morosco.

Interpreter: Peter Afanasenko

DATE, TIME May 16, 2003, 7:35 - 7:48 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Vladimir, good day. It is good to hear your voice.
(U)

President Putin: I am also glad to hear you. (U)

The President: Yes, I am looking forward to coming to
St. Petersburg. You and I will have a good chance to talk. I look
forward to coming to that special city. (U)

President Putin: I am afraid that very soon you will become even
more popular in that city than I am. (U)

The President: That is impossible. (U)

President Putin: Actually, I am quite serious saying that.
According to my information, people in St. Petersburg are quite
positive about your paying so much attention to their city and I will
also be eager to meet you. We had quite a good conversation with
Colin Powell. I believe he will report on that meeting in detail.
And, of course, you know that on the day of his visit to Moscow, our
parliament ratified the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty.
You know that the ratification was done by the vast majority of
votes. (U)

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(The President: I wanted to call and thank you very much for your excellent reception of Colin. He already reported back, and was very pleased with the meeting. It is very clear we will take our relationship to a new level. In St. Petersburg, we will confirm that and that is very important. And, thank you for the vote in the Duma. It was a positive vote, a very positive vote, and that was noticed in our country. When we come to St. Petersburg, we have a lot to talk about. The strategic partnership, a novel strategic partnership, it is something you and I can expand on. And, of course, we can talk about Iraq and how we can go forward, and I want to thank you for talking to Colin and listening to Colin about the U.N. role. Given, however, the current environment, one of the things that will be very important is for me and you to work together to use our skills to fight terrorism. I condemn the terror attacks in Chechnya and want to express my sympathy for the tens of people killed by these murderers. I know you spoke to your country today through your State of the Federation speech. You were clear, articulate, and strong on fighting terrorism and on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It was a very strong statement. I want to thank you for that. It is clear that the enemy still exists. They struck you in Chechnya and struck us in Saudi Arabia. I want your opinion on that as well, that is why I am calling my friend. ~~(S)~~

(President Putin: Thank you very much for this call. This is always a special event when we talk to each other. I am pleased to hear your voice. ~~(S)~~

The President: Thank you. (U)

President Putin: I am saying this quite frankly. It is important for us to maintain such contact. We will be able to do much in St. Petersburg. We will be able to show everybody the fundamentals of the Russia-U.S. relationship. In regard to Iraq, I spoke to Colin Powell, and I believe he will report to you on the matter and I think you will agree with me and actually you kept saying this. We want to be partners and to meet mutual interests of each other. To respect our interests, you know that there are many details and questions in regard to this matter. Our experts will find ways to agree upon it, and you know there are problems and issues directly related to Russian interests, they comprise billions of dollars. I completely agree with you, we ought to demonstrate our unity in fighting terrorism. And, as you are, I am deeply moved and disturbed by the terrorist acts in Chechnya and Saudi Arabia. Please accept my condolences and deepest sympathy on this occasion. You know that the signature was the same in both cases. The people acted on instructions from one and the same center. The developments in Afghanistan are quite concerning, and I agree with you also that this weapons of mass destruction proliferation is quite alarming. This is one more field where we could and are cooperating together. And,

(then there are some bilateral issues like economic issues. You know the Atomic Minister and Agriculture Minister have visited and have established good contacts. Our Minister of Defense will visit Washington soon and if you find some time for him, I would like to ask you to receive our Minister of Defense. (S)

The President: Yes, I will do that. (U)

President Putin: I want to thank you for that. Our cooperation in this field is of great importance to us. The last thing is that our experts and negotiators on economic affairs, Mr. Zoellick and Kudrin, met in Paris and discussed acceptance of Russia into the WTO. I felt the political impulse you had talked about previously, the positive attitude towards Russian acceptance into the WTO. (S)

The President: Yes, yes. (U)

President Putin: I want to thank you for that. And, I would like to assure you that you are the most awaited guest in Russia. I will be waiting for you in St. Petersburg, we will do a good job, and in the evening, we will have the possibility of some rest. (U)

The President: Absolutely, we can have some blinis. (U)

(President Putin: You can be sure there will be some blinis with caviar. (U)

The President: Perfect. Listen, Vladimir, I am confident that our relationship will move forward. You sound good and strong. (U)

President Putin: That is excellent, thank you very much. Talk to you later. (U)

The President: Talk to you later. (U)

President Putin: Thank you, George. (U)

The President: Bye. (U)

President Putin: Bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --